



THE HEINZ AWARDS

for the Arts, Economy and Environment

EMBARGOED UNTIL
Thursday, November 18, 2021

From Advancing Workplace Protections for Caregivers to Removing Barriers to Entrepreneurship and Home Ownership in the Deep South, Heinz Family Foundation Names Dina Bakst, Sherry Leiwant and William Bynum Recipients of the 26th Heinz Awards for the Economy

PITTSBURGH, November 18, 2021 — The Heinz Family Foundation today named fair workplace policy advocates Dina Bakst, J.D., and Sherry Leiwant, J.D., co-founders of [A Better Balance](#), and William (Bill) Bynum, founder and CEO of HOPE, a Jackson, Mississippi-based community development financial organization, recipients of the prestigious 26th Heinz Awards for the Economy.

As part of the accolade, Mr. Bynum will receive, and Ms. Bakst and Ms. Leiwant will share, an unrestricted cash award of \$250,000.

Through policy work, direct legal services and public education provided by [A Better Balance](#), **Dina Bakst and Sherry Leiwant** are using the power of advocacy and the law to advance justice for workers so they can care for themselves and their loved ones without jeopardizing their economic security. A Better Balance advances worker protections on issues such as paid family and medical leave, paid sick time, fair and flexible scheduling, protections for pregnant and breastfeeding workers, affordable quality child care and elder care, and equal pay. The organization's work has impacted millions of families across the country and helped to elevate the importance of support for caregiving workers in the national conversation as a key cornerstone of advancing economic, gender and racial justice.

Ms. Bakst and Ms. Leiwant have successfully driven the passage of paid family and medical leave programs in 10 states, paid sick time laws in 15 states and dozens of localities, and pregnancy accommodations laws in 30 states and localities, among other work-family policies. Ms. Bakst is credited with launching a national movement for the federal Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA) through her 2012 op-ed in *The New York Times*, "[Pregnant and Pushed Out of a Job](#)," and has twice testified before Congress to call for stronger protections for pregnant and breastfeeding workers. In 2021, the PWFA passed in the House and advanced through Senate Committee with sweeping, bipartisan support. Building on the successful passage of paid leave bills in the states, Ms. Leiwant has also been instrumental in driving Congressional momentum to establish a national paid family and medical leave program using lessons learned to set the standard for a strong, inclusive paid leave program.

Thanks to Ms. Bakst's and Ms. Leiwant's work through A Better Balance, millions of workers across the country are now protected by fair and supportive work-family policies such as these. A Better Balance also works to educate and empower workers so that they can benefit from these laws through robust know-your-rights resources, trainings and its free work-family legal helpline that directly assists thousands of workers each year.

As a result of the pandemic, demands for A Better Balance's expertise have exploded, and with Ms. Bakst's and Ms. Leiwant's leadership, A Better Balance has expanded its capacity and redoubled its

efforts to urgently advocate for protections to support working families and to educate workers about existing laws that can help as they navigate the crisis, including by developing model legislation for COVID-19 paid leave and building out a database of pandemic-specific know-your-rights fact sheets and resources.

“Centering the needs of the most marginalized pregnant workers, mothers and family caregivers in America—and ensuring the law treats them with dignity, equity and respect—is what drives me every day,” says Ms. Bakst. “We founded A Better Balance with the mission and vision to ensure no worker in this country is forced to choose between having a baby or caring for a seriously ill loved one and maintaining their economic security. That work will continue until we have the systemic solutions in place that truly support this country's working women and families, especially the most vulnerable among us.”

“At the time of our founding, we saw how conversations about work-family balance were failing to center the realities of the lowest paid workers and the women of color who have long shouldered the burden of our nation’s care crisis,” says Ms. Leiwant. “It is an honor to work every day to transform our workplaces and build a foundation of policies that will serve every family and ensure the essential work of providing care is valued.”

“John Heinz advocated for an economy that simultaneously drove innovation, valued its workers and embraced human dignity,” says Teresa Heinz, Chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation. “Decades later we are discovering just how essential that sort of economy is to our country’s and planet’s future. For far too long and for too many working people, the need to maintain a healthy pregnancy or to care for a new baby or a sick family member has meant the loss of employment. We honor Dina and Sherry for their dedicated, persistent efforts on behalf of all workers and for demanding policy that is fair to working families.”

Bill Bynum is the founding CEO of [HOPE](#), a family of organizations comprised of Hope Credit Union, Hope Enterprise Corporation and Hope Policy Institute, which provides financial services; aggregates resources; and engages in advocacy to combat the extent to which factors such as race, gender, birthplace and wealth limit one’s ability to prosper. HOPE works in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee, a region where indicators of economic mobility such as employment, housing, education and healthcare are among the worst in the United States. Entrenched poverty and racial disparities have exacerbated these conditions, as have the lack of access to traditional banking services for the region’s most economically distressed people and places, most notably in the Mississippi Delta and Alabama Black Belt.

Since 1994, HOPE has attacked these challenges by providing affordable, responsibly structured financial services and advocated for policies and practices that bridge opportunity gaps and close the racial wealth divide in the Deep South. These efforts have generated more than \$3 billion in financing that has benefited nearly 2 million people across the Deep South, while influencing policies that helped shape the nation’s community development finance sector into a force for diversity and inclusion. Eight out of 10 people served by the credit union are people of color and 60% are women, over one-third were unbanked or underbanked prior to joining HOPE, and 75% of HOPE’s member households earned incomes of less than \$50,000 last year. Among the homeowners reached by HOPE, nine out of 10 are first time

homebuyers—supported by products designed to directly address the consequences of the racial wealth gap.

“Financial institutions can either perpetuate the nation’s racial wealth gap or make the necessary, structural changes to close it. There is no middle ground,” says HOPE CEO Bill Bynum. “In an increasingly diverse nation, our collective self-interest hinges on the presence of a financial system that works for everyone, particularly historically people of color, who comprise an emerging majority of Americans.”

HOPE’s impact has been greatest during times of crisis. This was the case after Hurricane Katrina devastated lives, homes and businesses in the region. HOPE’s advocacy resulted in policy changes that doubled the amount of public funds available to individuals without flood or property insurance. HOPE partnered with a local foundation and utility company to fund accounts that enabled 2,500 people to access Federal Emergency Management Agency funds for vital resources such as food, clothes, tarps and relocation assistance. HOPE also managed recovery programs that assisted more than 10,000 homeowners and small businesses. In response to the current pandemic, and resulting economic crisis, HOPE financed over 5,000 Paycheck Protection Program loans—89% for businesses owned by people of color and half owned by women—many that were turned down by banks with which they had an existing relationship.

“The Heinz Awards honors Bill for shining light on and addressing the toll that decades of underinvestment, neglect, predatory lending and a lack of access to basic financial services has had on those living in the rural Deep South,” said Teresa Heinz, Chairman of the Heinz Family Foundation. “Through HOPE’s program of resources and services, Bill has crafted a proven model to stop this trajectory of entrenched poverty and create a new future for generations of Americans, in the South and all across rural America.”

Created to honor the memory of the late U.S. Senator John Heinz, the Heinz Awards honors excellence and achievement in areas of great importance to Senator Heinz. The 26th awards bring the total number of recipients to 158 and reflect more than \$30 million given since the program was launched in 1993.

This year’s additional recipients by category are:

Arts: Tanya A. Aguiñiga, Los Angeles, California, a visual artist whose works blend contemporary craft, sculpture and performance to address issues of migration, gender and identity.

Arts: Sanford L. Biggers, Sag Harbor, New York, an artist whose work in sculpture, painting, video and performance, positions him as an interlocutor with the past through formal explorations that reveal complicated and intertwined cultural and aesthetic relationships while suggesting new narratives.

Environment: Gabe Brown, Bismarck, North Dakota, a pioneer in regenerative agriculture and soil health who is catalyzing the movement to change land use from conventional to regenerative farming practices, transforming farmland from an environmental problem to a solution.

Environment: Jacqueline C. Patterson, M.S.W., M.P.H., Baltimore, Maryland, founder and executive director of the Chisholm Legacy Project, a resource hub for Black frontline climate justice leadership.

Recipients of the 26th Heinz Awards will be honored at a virtual event in December. For more information on the awardees, visit <https://heinzawards.net/2021>.

EDITORS/REPORTERS: To obtain photos of the recipients, please contact Maya Brod at MBrod@burness.com or 301-467-4917.

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About the Heinz Awards

Established by Teresa Heinz in 1993 to honor the memory of her late husband, U.S. Senator John Heinz, the Heinz Awards celebrates the accomplishments and spirit of the Senator by recognizing the extraordinary achievements of individuals in the areas of great importance to him. The Awards, administered by the Heinz Family Foundation, recognizes individuals for their contributions in the areas of the **Arts**, the **Economy** and the **Environment**. Nominations are submitted by invited experts, who serve anonymously, and are reviewed by jurors appointed by the Heinz Family Foundation. The jurors make recommendations to the Board of Directors, which subsequently selects the Award recipients, two in each of the three awards categories. For more information on the Heinz Awards, visit www.heinzawards.net.

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